

Mountain Lion Behavior: Meaning, Risk and Appropriate Response

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Lion Behavior	Meaning	Human Risk	Appropriate Human Response
Lion far away and moving away	Secretive and avoidance	Insignificant	Keep children where they can be observed.
Lion more than 100 yards away, various positions and movements, attention directed away from people	Indifference	Slight, provided human response is appropriate	Avoid rapid movements, running or loud, excited talk. Stay in groups; keep children with adults. Observe lion. For agencies, this may indicate future problems if repeated.
Lion more than 50 yards away; various body positions; ears up; may be changing positions; intent attention toward people; following behavior	Curiosity	Slight for adults given proper response Serious for unaccompanied children	Hold small children; keep older children close to an adult. Do not turn your back on lion; assume standing position on ground, rocks, or large equipment that is above lion if possible. Look for sticks, rocks, or other weapons and pick them up, using an aggressive posture while doing so. Watch lion at all times. However, if lion sits, looks away, and grooms itself, this is not a predatory situation and you should imitate the lion, but keep it in peripheral vision. For agencies, consider warning visitors and limiting hiking to groups.
Lion closer than 50 yards away; intense staring at humans; hiding	Assessing success of attack	Substantial	All of the above steps, plus place older children behind adults. If a safer location or one above the lion is available, go there. Do not run. Raise hands and other objects such as jackets above head so as to present image of bulk as high as possible. Prepare to defend yourself.
Lion perched in tree	Secretive and avoidance	Insignificant	Keep children where they can be observed.
Intense staring and hiding coupled with crouching and/or creeping toward humans	Moving to attack position	Serious if within 200 yards	Take all of the above actions. If possible, move slowly to place large objects such as trees, boulders between yourself and the lion, but do not lose sight of the lion. Smile! (show your teeth). Make menacing sounds; throw things if lion is close enough to hit.
Crouching; tail twitching; intense staring at humans; ears erect; body low to ground; head may be up	Pre-attack; awaiting opportunity	Grave	Do all the above and use whatever weapons you have. If you have lethal weapons, take careful aim and use them now. Pepper spray may be effective if lion is close enough and downwind. If you have rocks or other items that can be thrown, use them.
Ears turned so the "fur" side is forward; tail twitching; body and head low to ground; rear legs may be "pumping" or "treading" gently up and down	Imminent attack; lion is ready to leap	Extreme	Prepare to defend yourself in close combat. Fight back. Make menacing noises. The attack may happen within seconds. If you have any chance of averting it, it is by acting aggressively toward the lion. If the distance is too great to use a stick, run rapidly toward the lion until you can put the stick in its face and eyes. If you lack a stick, run toward the lion with arms high, making loud noises. Stop before you are within striking distance of its paws. Rapid movements towards the lion, especially from above, may still deter an attack. Avoid positions below the lion; do not turn your back on it.